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Fifth Committee
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Agenda item 114
Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Improving the working methods of the Fifth Committee

Draft proposals submitted by the Chairman, Mr. Anwarul K. Chowdhury (Bangladesh)

1. The present draft is submitted for the consideration of members of the Fifth Committee. It is based on the draft proposals dated 14 August 1998 and comments of delegations on that draft made on 17 August 1998 following discussions held in informal meetings on 9, 16, 19 and 24 March and 11 May 1998 and on the comments received from Member States to the informal paper circulated on 24 March 1998, regarding review of the working methods of the Fifth Committee with a view to rationalizing them and initiating efficiency measures that, *inter alia*, would enable the Committee to accomplish its tasks on time (General Assembly resolution 52/220, section III, para. 93).

2. To this end, it may be recalled that the Committee agreed that, as an important measure to achieve the objectives of this exercise, efforts should be made to improve the working methods of the Fifth Committee and for good faith and a spirit of compromise to prevail, respecting the position of each Member State.

Role of the Bureau

3. The following measures are addressed to the Bureau:

(a) Bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 52/163 which ensures regional representation in the Bureau, members of the Bureau should be fully aware that the Committee meets during the year.

(b) The Bureau, shall with the technical assistance of the Secretariat, organize the work of the Committee and the documentation for the session, taking into account the views of Member States. Reports before the Committee should be strictly guided by this.

(c) The Bureau shall continue its current practice of submitting a weekly detailed programme of work to the Committee in the manner presented at the fifty-second session.

(d) In organizing the work of the Committee, the Bureau should schedule the general debate on a report long enough after the date of issue of that report to allow time for the study of the report by Member States and time for preparation of statements.

(e) The Bureau shall establish contacts with substantive officers of the Secretariat who will be responsible for documentation and establish a mechanism for monitoring progress in the preparation of documentation for the session as well as follow up on full and effective implementation of General Assembly resolutions and decisions.

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(f) The Bureau should look into the biennialization of the work of the Fifth Committee and make recommendations for compliance with General Assembly resolution 46/220 to the Committee.

(g) The Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, should also identify appropriate senior Secretariat staff who will be responsible for the substantive questions at both the formal and the informal consultations.

(h) The Bureau should keep monitoring closely the progress in the informal consultations and on the various items, as and when needed, and give guidance to facilitate a decision.

(i) The Bureau should also look into the need to schedule information briefings for delegations on specific issues.

Resumed sessions

4. All efforts should be made to conclude the consideration of all important issues during the main segment of the Committee's work. Scheduling agenda items to be considered at a given session should be carefully looked into and finalized with the full understanding of the substantive Secretariat offices which will be preparing the documentation.

5. Serious efforts should be made to have only one resumed session of five weeks' duration to consider all matters pending from the main segment as well as the matters relating to the financing of the peacekeeping operations.

Meetings of the Fifth Committee

6. There should be a periodic review of the Committee's working methods.

7. At the opening of the session, the Chairman should remind delegations of the decisions adopted on the organization of the work of the General Assembly based on the recommendations of the General Committee.

8. Attention is also drawn to the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 46/220 entitled "Rationalization of the work of the Fifth Committee: biennialization of the programme of work", 48/264 entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly" and 51/241 entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations system".

Role and functions of coordinators

9. The Bureau should not propose coordinators who have a special interest in the agenda items under their responsibilities.

10. Coordinators are expected to provide impartial leadership and make proposals that may facilitate the decision-making process.

11. Coordinators should maintain full transparency and share information as widely as possible.

12. The following measures are addressed to the coordinators:

(a) A coordinator should, if possible, prepare, with the technical assistance of the Secretariat, a draft resolution for consideration at the beginning of the informal consultations.

(b) A coordinator should outline very clearly the organization of the work at hand, and keep the Bureau informed of progress in the informal consultations.

(c) If considered necessary, the coordinator may invite written proposals from delegations before the start of informal consultations.

Informal consultations

13. Draft resolutions and/or elements for inclusion in draft resolutions should be circulated as early as possible during the informal consultations.

14. The negotiations in the informal consultations should focus on the draft resolution/decision before the Committee.

Scheduling of meetings and conference servicing

15. In order to avoid unnecessary confusion and to enhance efficiency, changes in the programme of work should be kept to a minimum.

16. All efforts should be made by the Bureau, delegations and the Secretariat to avoid evening, night or weekend meetings.

17. Meetings, including informal consultations, should be scheduled only during normal meetings hours, i.e., from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m., and conference servicing should be guaranteed for those meetings.

Documentation

18. The Secretariat should ensure that reports are submitted for consideration by the Fifth Committee in accordance with the six weeks' rule. It should bring to the

attention of the Committee/Bureau any difficulty in complying within this rule.

19. The reports should be issued in accordance with paragraphs 24 and 25 of General Assembly resolution 52/214 B on the pattern of conferences.

20. Up-to-date information should be provided on the status of documentation. The estimated date of issue of documents should also be given.

21. The quality of the reports submitted by the Secretariat should be substantially improved.

22. Consideration should be given to the presentation of oral reports where feasible and justified.

23. Substantive offices concerned should include time for preparation and timely submission of documentation in their work plans and establish a mechanism for their timely clearance by senior officials.

24. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions is requested to schedule its consideration of reports, bearing in mind the organization of work of the Fifth Committee. As necessary, the Advisory Committee should be able to adjust its work programme to meet the requirements of the Fifth Committee.

25. Attention is drawn to paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 46/220 on the rationalization of the work of the Fifth Committee: biennialization of the programme of work, by which the Assembly requested the subsidiary bodies reporting to the Fifth Committee to adjust their programme of work to conform to the biennial work programme for the Fifth Committee.

Substantive issues

26. The following matters should be kept in mind:

(a) Compliance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations in the budgetary process;

(b) Compliance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation;

(c) Compliance with General Assembly resolutions that outline budgetary procedures and principles, in particular resolution 41/213;

(d) Due consideration should be given to the recommendations made by the relevant subsidiary bodies for the effectiveness of the Fifth Committee.

27. The practice followed by the Fifth Committee for the adoption of decisions should be carefully reviewed.

28. Decisions, particularly those relating to budgetary questions, should be adopted through a transparent and participatory process and in full compliance with General Assembly resolution 41/213.

29. Member States and the Secretariat should fully respect the decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly in letter and spirit.